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(54) Title: CONNECTION SYSTEM FOR CONNECTING PEX TUBING TO A FITTING WHICH INCLUDES A CLAMP

(54) Título : SISTEMA DE CONEXIÓN PARA CONECTAR UNA TUBERÍA PEX CON UN FITTING QUE INCLUYE UNA ABRAZADERA

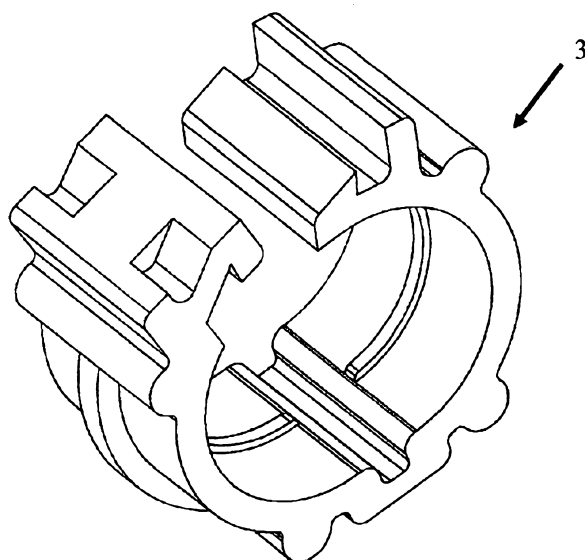


figura 7

(57) Abstract: The invention concerns a connection system which is economical to manufacture and install, for connecting PEX tubing (1) or the like to a fitting (2) for PEX tubing, or the like, the system including a clamp (3). The invention is characterized in that the clamp (3) comprises two curved walls (4), a flexible hinge (5) which connects first ends of said curved walls (4), coupling means (6) which connect second ends of said curved walls (4) and define a single coupling position, and an annular rim (7) which is disposed in an inner region of the curved walls (4) and fits into the tubing (1).

(57) Resumen: Sistema de conexión, que involucra bajos costos de fabricación e instalación, para conectar una tubería (1) PEX, o lo similar, con un fitting (2) para tubería PEX, o lo similar; en donde dicho sistema incluye una abrazadera (3) y está caracterizado porque dicha abrazadera (3) comprende dos paredes curvas (4), una articulación flexible (5) que conecta un respectivo primer extremo de dichas paredes curvas (4), medios de enganche (6) que conectan un respectivo segundo extremo de dichas paredes curvas (4) y que definen una única posición de enganche, una pestaña anular (7) dispuesta en una región interna de dichas paredes curvas (4) que se clava en la tubería (1).

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Declaraciones según la Regla 4.17:

— sobre la calidad de inventor (Regla 4.17(iv))

— antes de la expiración del plazo para modificar las reivindicaciones y para ser republicada si se reciben modificaciones (Regla 48.2(h))

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— con informe de búsqueda internacional (Art. 21(3))

Connection system to connect a PEX tubing with a fitting that includes a clamp defined by two curved sidewalls, a flexible joint, clenching means that define a unique clenching position, and an annular flange.

Background to the Invention

The present invention is related to a connection system, which involves low cost production and installation, to connect a PEX tubing (1), or similar, with a fitting (2) for PEX tubing, or similar.

The cross-linked polyethylene (PEX) tubings offer a series of advantages, such as good mechanical resistance, good temperature resistance, as well as good elastic memory, among others.

Consequently, the connection of PEX tubings with fittings is used in an intensive manner in a series of industries.

However, the PEX tubing is of a semi-rigid nature, on account of the connection systems used to connect them with the fittings require that the clamps are capable of applying a considerable force that is stronger than that used for connection to flexible hoses and other types of flexible pipes.

Additionally, it is important to note that, in order to comply with industrial regulations, the standards that should be satisfied are that the connections involving PEX tubings require that the same adequately resist, for example, a continuous operation for 1000 hours constraining water to a temperature of 80°C and a pressure of 0,7 MPa (100 PSI).

In order to adequately satisfy said standards, the clamps used in the PEX connection should be capable of exerting a quantity of forces within a delimited range.

In fact, if the force that the clamp exerted were to be slightly lower than the optimal value, the connection would remain loose, which would impede correct performance of the same (and would not pass the demanding standards previously mentioned). On the contrary, if the force exerted by the clamp were to be slightly higher than optimal value, the connection elements (PEX tubing and polymeric material fittings) would remain subjected to an excessive force that would also impair its performance (since its operational life would be shorter due to material fatigue which would also prevent that it pass the demanding standards previously indicated).

Due to the aforementioned, currently only metal clamps are typically used to connect PEX tubings with fittings, which involves relatively higher costs due to, on one hand for the cost of the metal, and on the other hand to the fact that they require special tools and/or a careful installation that guarantees that the clamps exert an optimum compression (no more and no less).

Additionally, it is important to note that among the systems that use metallic clamps, only the "Oetiker" type of system (for example see documents US 4.003.238 and US 4.315.348) has proven to be consistently capable of generating a suitable compression in its clamps, although it requires on one hand, the use of a special (and costly) tool, and on the other hand generates a permanent deformation on the clamp that is transmitted to the tubing. However, due to the aforementioned, these metallic clamps do not allow that the connection can be disassembled (in the case that it is required to modify it) since during the installation process both the clamp and the tubing suffer high deformation levels that impair reuse.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned, among Prior Art there are connection systems for tubings that involve plastic clamps, although none of these allows generation of a sufficiently strong compression and within a sufficiently delimited range such as to be used in the connection of PEX tubings with their respective fittings.

The document US 3.605.200 reveals a connection system that involves tubular elements and reveals a clamp defined by an arched sidewall, which has clenching elements arranged within the ends that are defined by multiple hooks, which can define multiple levels of compression. Additionally, this document reveals a triple annular flange on the internal surface that is fixed against the hose in a connected position. However, it is important to that this document does not reveal the possibility of disconnecting the clamp. On the other hand, the multiple hooks define multiple clamping positions, which complicates this connection system's ability to consistently reach an optimum pressure (within a delimited range).

The document US 3.925.851 reveals a connection system that involves plastic hoses and a clamp defined by an arched sidewall wherein the ends have arranged clenching elements that are defined by multiple hooks, which can define multiple compression levels. Additionally, this document reveals an annular flange, with a section in a "V," on its inner surface that is fixed against the hose in a connected position. However, it is important to note that this document does not reveal the possibility of disconnecting the clamp. On the other hand, the multiple hooks define multiple clenching positions, which hinders that this connection system can consistently reach an optimum compression (within a delimited range).

On the other hand, in Prior Art there are known systems to support tubings to sidewalls, roofs or other surfaces, that have no relation with a connection system (since these are simply systems for tubing support). With respect to those support systems it is very important to note that they are not oriented in any case to exert such a high pressure as is required in a connection system.

The document US 4.291.855 reveals a support system of tubings that reveal a supporting element defined by an arched sidewall wherein the ends have arranged clenching elements defined by a single hook. However, the compression that this supporting element exerts is clearly low since it does not completely embrace the tubing (which impedes a strong compression). On the other hand, this supporting element can be disconnected because, on one hand, the compression that is exerted is very low (therefore separation of the hooks is not difficult) and on the other hand, there is a significant separation between the superior hook (81) and the element that limits its movement (12) which permits that a screwdriver (or similar) may be introduced (in said separation) to create a disconnection lever.

However, this significant separation would create a serious problem should this element be wanted to be used in a clamp of a connection system since this clamp (due to said significant separation) would not be capable of effectively impeding an excessive compression during installation. The aforementioned, would clearly be detrimental to the performance of the connection since, as the compression involved is very high, any excessive compression would harm both the tubing and the additional connection elements (as mentioned above).

Summarized description of the invention

The present invention is related to a connection system that involves low cost production and installation, to connect a PEX tubing, or similar, with a fitting for PEX tubing, or similar.

In order to achieve the aforementioned, the invention uses a clamp with clenching methods that defined a single clenching position which allows definition of a single level of compression in a reliable manner.

Additionally, the present invention incorporates an annular flange arranged in an internal region of the clamp and aims to fix itself into the tubing to which the clamp is attached, all of which allows a very reliable connection and with a minimum level of deformation to the tubing (which at the same time allows the tubing to be reused in the case that an installation correction should be desired).

On the other hand, the present invention reveals unclenching means that allow the device to easily unclench the clenching means indicated above (despite the fact that the clenching means involve a very high compression), all of which is very convenient when the correction of an hydraulic installation is desired.

The invention additionally reveals capping means that are arranged in a manner to efficiently limit the displacement of the clenching means with the purpose

of reliably avoiding that the clamp could exert an excessive compression while being installed.

According to an aspect there is provided a connection system, which involves low cost production and installation, to connect a PEX tubing, or similar, with a fitting for PEX tubing, or similar; wherein said system includes a clamp, wherein said clamp comprised of two curved sidewalls, a flexible joint that connects a respective first end of said curved sidewalls, clenching means that connect a respective second end of said curved sidewalls and that define a unique clenching position, an annular flange arranged in an internal region of said curved sidewalls that are fixed in the tubing, wherein the connection system further includes unclenching means, which allow disconnection from said clenching method and wherein said curved sidewalls include a reinforcement annular flange available on the respective exterior surface of same.

Description of the figures

The figures 1a and 1b show a preferred first modality of the clamp of the invention in open and closed conditions.

The figures 2a and 2b schematically show the force that should be exerted in order to close the clamp in the preferred first modality of the invention.

The figures 3a and 3b show a preferred second modality of the clamp of the invention in open and closed conditions, wherein means to easily open the clamp are included.

The figures 4a and 4b show a preferred third modality of the clamp of the invention in open and closed conditions, wherein means to easily open the clamp are included.

The figures 5a and 5b show a cross-sectional view of the preferred first modality of the clamp of the invention, wherein the transverse cross-section can be seen more clearly.

The figure 6 shows a cross-sectional view of the preferred first modality of the clamp of the invention, wherein it also shows the tubing and the fitting opening involved in the connection.

The figure 7 shows a view in perspective of a fourth preferred modality of the invention which corresponds to a modification of the first modality in that there are incorporated elements of structural reinforcement (which significantly improve the performance of the invention).

Detailed description of the preferred modality of the invention

The present invention is related with a connection system that involves low cost production and installation, to connect a PEX tubing, or similar, with a fitting for PEX tubing, or similar.

In order to achieve the aforementioned, said system includes a clamp (3) that is comprised of two curved sidewalls (4), a flexible joint (5) that connects a respective first end of said curved sidewalls (4), clenching means (6) that connect a respective second end to said curved sidewalls (4) and that define a single clenching position and consequently a single intensity of the compression force.

The invention additionally includes an annular flange (7) arranged in an internal region of said curved sidewalls (4) which are fixed in the tubing (1) with the purpose of concentrating and increasing the effectiveness of the compression force.

The system may additionally include unclenching means (8), that allow disconnection from said clenching means (6), which is particularly useful when it is desirable to make modifications and/or corrections to a hydraulic line that is being manufactured (or that has been previously manufactured).

Said unclenching means (8) may correspond to protuberances or exposed cavities in the clenching means (6) to allow that, by means of a screwdriver (or similar), can exert an unclenching lever that does not involve an over-compression of the connection elements (tubing, fitting and clamp). In order to do the latter (to not exert an over-compression) the force exerted by the lever should ideally be perpendicular to the forces that are reciprocally exerted between the hooks (via action and reaction) when they are in a clenched condition.

Additionally, the system may include capping means (9) that are arranged in a manner that limits the displacement of the clenching means (6) with the purpose of avoiding that the clamp (3) exerts an excessive compression force while it is being clenched.

Said clenching means (6) can be defined by two hooks arranged on said curved sidewalls (4), which allows for relatively low production cost to be involved.

Said capping means (9) may be defined by two surfaces that press against one another or can be found in close proximity of said hooks when they are in the clenched position, which allows for relatively low production cost to be involved.

Said hooks may be arranged in proximity to two respective sidewalls that are oriented in opposite directions and that can be pressed against one another by means of a force (F) to allow the clenching of said hooks, all of which allows that said clenching means can clench with the help of a low-cost tool such as pliers or similar.

Said fitting (2) can be comprised of a fitting opening, connected with said tubing (1), defined by a cylindrical region (10) with annular groove (11) in the exterior sidewall. This fitting configuration corresponds to the configuration used for excellence in PEX tubings and when used with the clamp of the invention, achieves an extremely strong anchor seeing that the annular flange (7) of the clamp (3) acts in conjunction with the annular groove (11) of the fitting opening.

Said curved sidewalls (4) may include a reinforcement annular flange (12) arranged in the respective exterior surfaces of the same, all of which allow reinforcement to the structure of the clamp (3) of the invention minimizing material use.

Said clamp (3) can be produced starting from a polymeric material with the purpose of reducing production cost.

Said annular flange (7) may have a triangular transverse section with the purpose of concentrating the compression force into a small region.

Throughout this specification and the claims which follow, unless the context requires otherwise, the word "comprise", and variations such as "comprises" or "comprising", will be understood to imply the inclusion of a stated integer or step or group of integers or steps but not the exclusion of any other integer or step or group of integers or steps.

The reference in this specification to any prior publication (or information derived from it), or to any matter which is known, is not, and should not be taken as, an acknowledgement or admission or any form of suggestion that that prior publication (or information derived from it) or known matter forms part of the common general knowledge in the field of endeavour to which this specification relates.

The claims defining the invention are as follows:

1. Connection system, which involves low cost production and installation, to connect a PEX tubing, or similar, with a fitting for PEX tubing, or similar; wherein said system includes a clamp, wherein said clamp comprised of two curved sidewalls, a flexible joint that connects a respective first end of said curved sidewalls, clenching means that connect a respective second end of said curved sidewalls and that define a unique clenching position, an annular flange arranged in an internal region of said curved sidewalls that are fixed in the tubing, wherein the connection system further includes unclenching means, which allow disconnection from said clenching method and wherein said curved sidewalls include a reinforcement annular flange available on the respective exterior surface of same.
2. Connection system according to claim 1, further including capping means that are arranged as a way of limiting displacement of clenching means with the purpose of avoiding that the clamp exert an excessive torque while it is clamped.
3. Connection system according to claim 2, wherein said clenching means are defined by two hooks arranged along said curved sidewalls and in that said capping means are defined by two surfaces which press against or are found in close proximity of said hooks when they are in the clamped position.
4. Connection system according to claim 3, wherein said hooks are closely arranged to two respective sidewalls that are oriented in opposite directions and can be pressed one against the other through a force to allow said hooks to clamp.
5. Connection system according to claim 4, wherein said unclenching means correspond to protuberances or joint cavities to the clenching means that define a leverage point which exerts, with the help of a screwdriver or similar, a force of separation between the hooks that are perpendicular to the forces which the hooks reciprocally exert when they are in the clamped position.
6. Connection system according to claim 5, wherein said fitting comprises a opening, connected to said tubing, defined by a cylindrical region with annular extracts in the exterior sidewall.
7. Connection system according to claim 6, wherein said clamp is manufactured henceforth from a polymeric material.

FIGURES

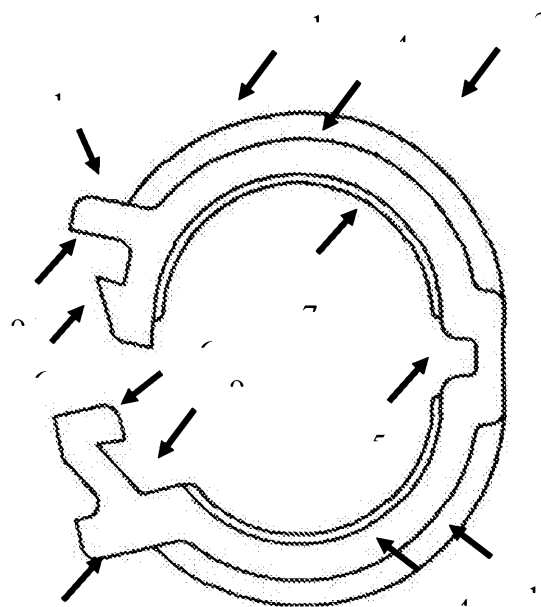


figure 1a

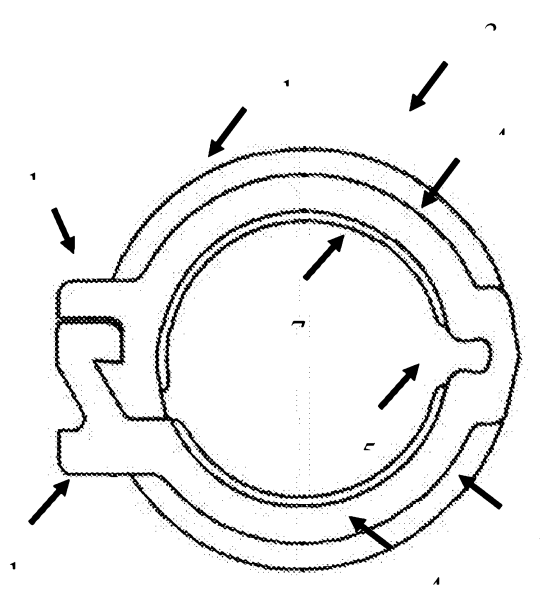


figure 1b

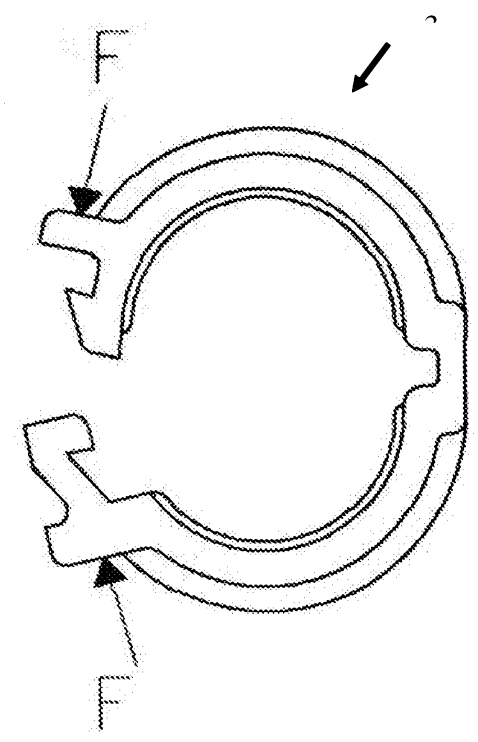


figure 2a

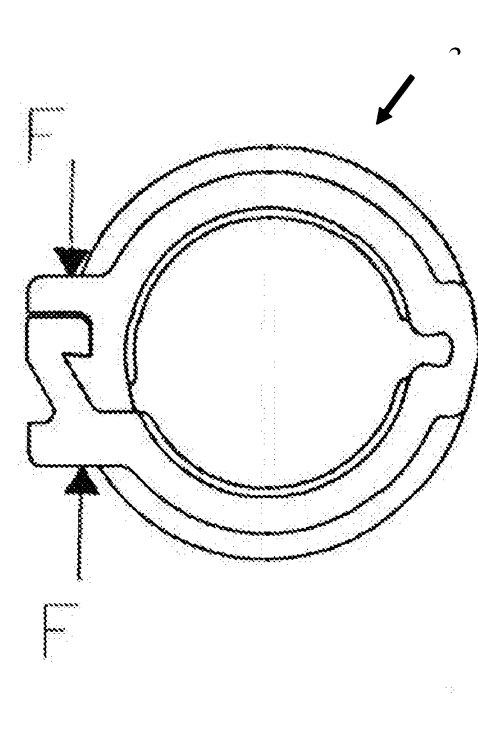


figure 2b

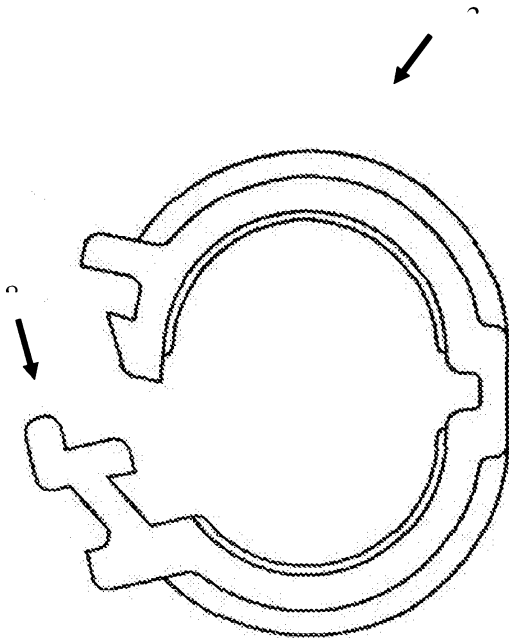


figure 3a

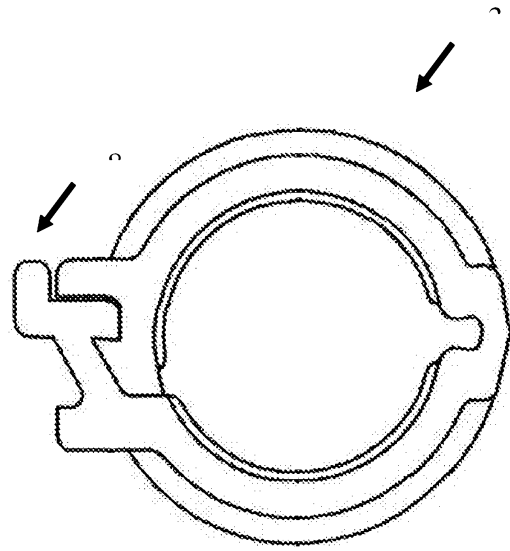


figure 3b

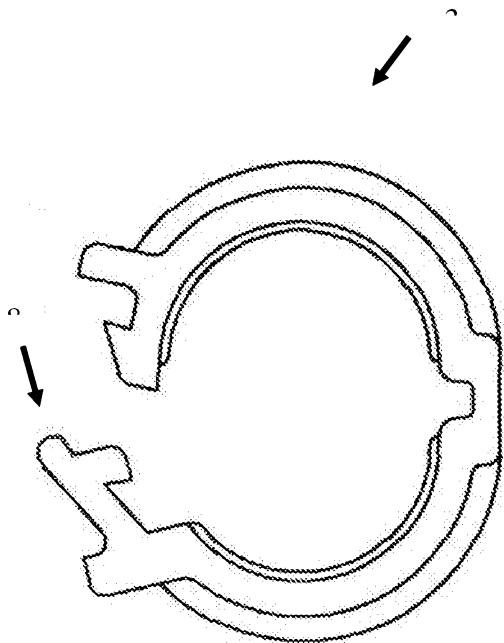


figure 4a

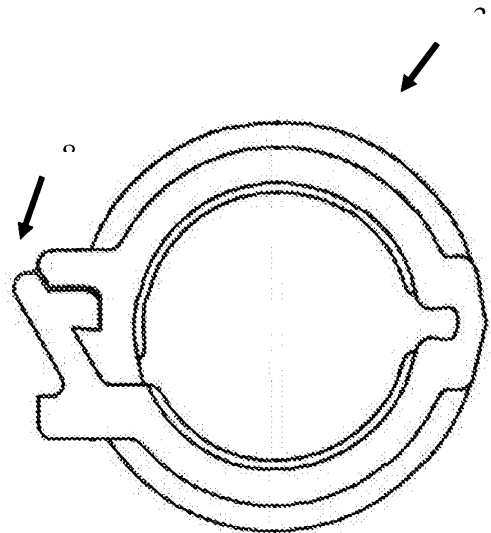


figure 4b

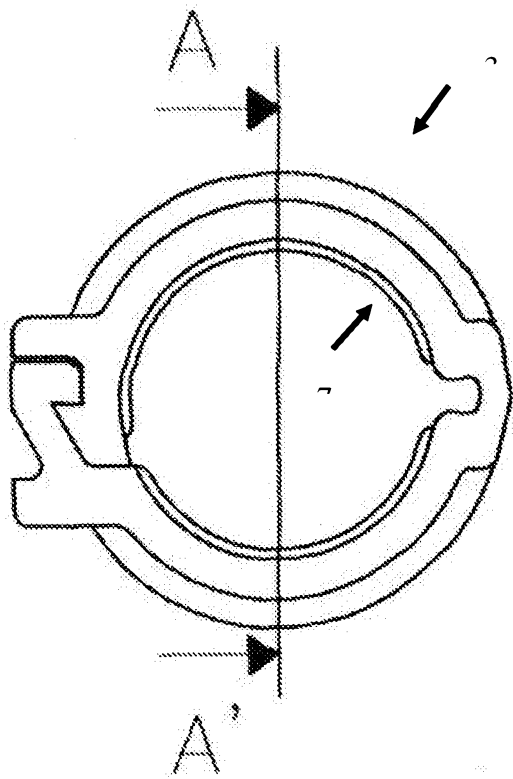


figure 5a

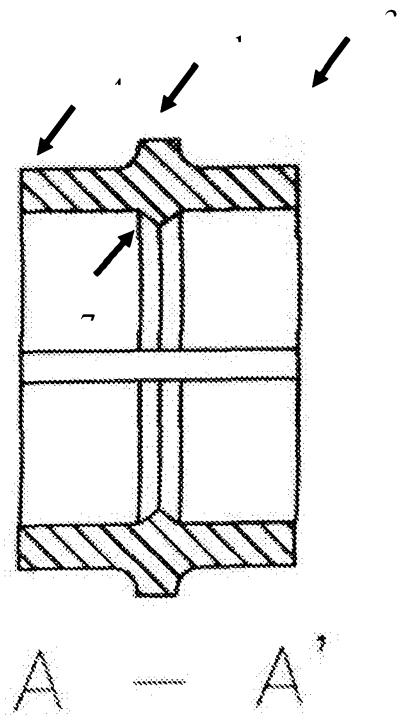


figure 5b

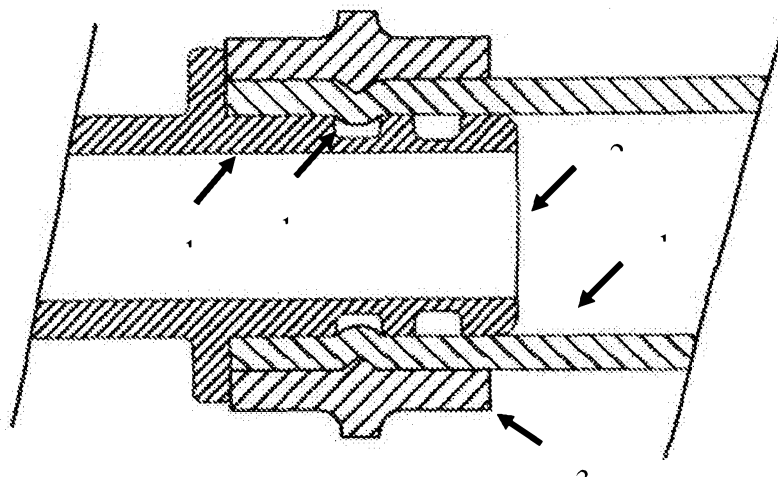


figure 6

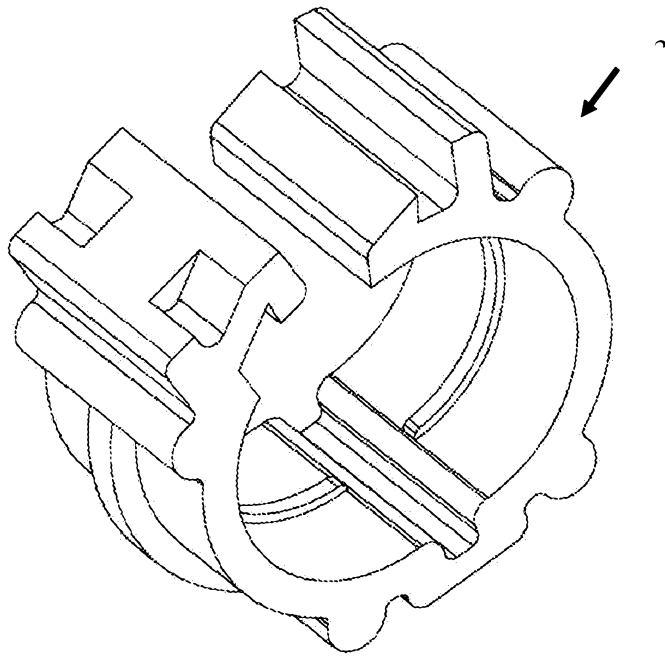


figure 7